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S E C R E T TEGUCIGALPA 000672

SIPDIS

NOFORN

STATE FOR INL, L, INR, WHA, WHA/CEN AND WHA/PPC  
SOUTHCOM FOR GENERAL HILL  
JIATF-S FOR RADM SIROIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2014

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SUBJECT: DRUG PLANE BURNED ON PROMINENT HONDURAN'S PROPERTY

REF: PIERCE E-MAIL 03/19/04

Classified By: Political Counselor Francisco L. Palmieri  
for reason 1.5 (b) and (d)

11. (U) On March 18, post received initial sketchy information involving the burned wreckage of a twin-engine aircraft in the area of Farallones in the Department of Colon on Honduras's north coast. It does not appear that any aircraft actually crashed on March 18. Upon further investigation, Post learned that the owner of the private property where the wreckage was discovered reported to the National Police on March 17 that an unauthorized plane had used a private airstrip on his property to land on March 16. National Police responding to his report located the burned wreckage March 18. The property owner reported that his guards had shot at the plane which then erupted into flames. This version does not track with other information post has developed on this wreckage (see para. 2). The only involvement of the Honduran Air Force (HAF) in this incident, which post has been able to confirm, is that the HAF did launch an aircraft to respond to an incoming air track March 14. The HAF reported no contact at all with this air track.

12. (S/NOFORN) Post's JIATF-S TAT provided information to the HAF March 14 about a known drug trafficking flight with a 1,000 kilo cocaine shipment from Colombia, which resulted in a fruitless air interdiction attempt. Separately, a law enforcement source provided information that the aircraft successfully landed March 14 on the private property of Miguel Facusse, a prominent Honduran, who is one of the nation's wealthiest individuals, leading industrialist, and uncle of former Honduran President Carlos Flores Facusse. Sources informed the police that the aircraft successfully landed March 14 and its cargo was off-loaded onto a convoy of vehicles that was guarded by about 30 heavily armed men. One source claimed that the property's single caretaker was shot at and fled the scene. The aircraft was then burned on March 14 during daylight hours near the runway. According to a source, a bulldozer/front-end loader buried the wreckage on the evening of March 15.

13. (C) Based on Miguel Facusse's March 17 report to the National Police (see para. 1), police interviewed several of his employees at the property and residents in the area. It is clear that these witnesses were aware of what had happened but did not report it at the time to police authorities because they were afraid. Facusse's property is heavily guarded and the prospect that individuals were able to access the property and, without authorization, use the airstrip is questionable. In addition, Facusse's report obviously contradicts other information received from the law enforcement source about the actual date of the event and TAT's intelligence about the March 14 air track. The source also claimed that Facusse was present on the property at the time of the incident. Finally, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the HAF was involved in any way with the end result of this air track, except that Post finds it improbable that the HAF interceptor would not have been able to see an aircraft being burned on the ground.

14. (C) Of additional interest is that this incident marks the third time in the last fifteen months that drug traffickers have been linked to this property owned by Mr. Facusse. In July 2003, a go-fast boat crashed into a sea wall on the same property and engaged in a firefight with National Police forces. Two known drug traffickers were arrested in this incident and 420 kilos of cocaine were recovered. Earlier in the year, another air track terminated at the same property and appeared to have used the same airstrip.

PALMER